

Message Text

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43

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

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R 181200Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3233

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJ: CONTINUING RIFT BETWEEN SLFP AND LSSP

REF: COLOMBO 2557

1. SUMMARY: EXCHANGE OF LETTERS OVER WEEKEND OF AUG 16-17 BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER SIRIMAVO BANDARANAIKE AND PLANTATION INDUSTRIES MINISTER COLVIN DE SILVA OF LANKA SAMA SAMAJA PARTY (LSSP) CONTINUES PUBLIC FEUD WITH THE COALITION GOVERNMENT. PM'S DEMAND FOR IMMEDIATE ASSURANCES FROM COALITION PARTNER LSSP THAT THEY WILL CEAASE THEIR CRITICISM OF HER POLICIES REMAINS UNANSWERED AMID REPORTS THAT PM IS DETERMINED TO FORCE THEM FROM THE GOVERNMENT. THIRD COALITION PARTY, MOSCOW-ORIENTED COMMUNIST PARTY (CP/M), IS ATTEMPTING TO PLAY ROLE OF PEACEMAKER BUT WITH LITTLE SUCCESS. RUMOR THAT ARMED FORCES ARE ON ALERT IS UNFOUNDED AND PRESS STORY THAT ARMY COMMANDER, GENERAL ATTYGALLE, HAS BEEN SUMMONED HOME FROM PEKING HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY DENIED. HOWEVER, TENSION REMAINS HIGH IN RECOGNITION THAT POTENTIAL FOR DISRUPTION BY AN ANGRY, SPURNED LSSP IS CONSIDERABLE.

END SUMMARY.

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2. AT LEAST PORTION OF ANGRY DIALOGUE BETWEEN COALITION PARTNERS SRI LANKA FREEDOM PARTY (SLFP) AND LSSP CONTINUES TO BE CARRIED ON THROUGH FRONT PAGES OF LOCAL NEWSPAPERS. PAST WEEKEND'S EPISODE BEGAN WITH LETTER TO PM FROM PLANTATION INDUSTRIES MINISTER COLVIN DE SILVA PROTESTING BEING QUOTED OUT OF CONTEXT IN PM'S ANGRY LETTER OF LAST WEEK (REFTEL). HE MAINTAINS THAT HIS CABINET MEMORANDUM RECOMMENDED ONLY TEMPORARY RETENTION OF INDEPENDENT AGENCY HOUSES, NOT THEIR CONTINUED PERMANENT EXISTENCE AS IMPLIED BY PM.

3. SHE HAS REPLIED WITH LETTER DEFENDING HER POSITION BUT REPEATING THAT IMPORTANT ISSUE IS WHETHER OR NOT "VITUPERATIVE POLITICS" WILL END. SHE POINTS OUT THAT THREE DAYS HAVE PASSED SINCE HER FIRST LETTER WITH NO ASSURANCES FROM LSSP LEADERS THAT THEY WILL CEASE THEIR ATTACKS ON SLFP AND ON HER LATE HUSBAND AND, FORMER PRIME MINISTER S.W.R.D. BANDARANAIKE.

4. ASSUMPTION IS WIDESPREAD HERE THAT LSSP WANTS TO REMAIN IN COALITION AND WOULD BE WILLING TO SWALLOW ITS PRIDE AND RETRACT STATEMENTS OF LAST WEEK. HOWEVER, THERE ARE ALSO STORIES THAT PM HAS DECIDED TO FORCE OUT LSSP IF IT DOES NOT LEAVE ON ITS OWN VOLITION. CEYLON DAILY MIRROR REPORTS THAT PM'S SON, ANURA BANDARANAIKE, MADE A SPEECH SUNDAY CALLING LSSP GREATER THREAT TO GOVT THAN OPPOSITION UNITED NATIONAL PARTY (UNP), AND PREDICTING THAT SLFP WILL CONTINUE GOVT WITH SUPPORT FO COMMUNIST PARTY.

5. COMMUNIST PARTY ON FRIDAY PUBLICLY APPEALED TO OTHER COALITION PARTNERS TO RESOLVE THEIR DIFFERENCES THROUGH DISCUSSION RATHER THAN PUBLIC POLEMICS IN NEWSPAPERS. IT CALLED FOR MEETING OF JOINT COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF UNITED FRONT, STRESSING THAT MATTERS OF PRESTIGE SHOULD NOT STAND IN THE WAY OF UNITY.

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6. PRESS STATEMENT CITED REFTEL THAT ARMY COMMANDER ATTYGALLE HAD BEEN SUMMONED HOME FROM PRC HAS BEEN DENIED OFFICIALLY. HE IS SCHEDULED TO RETURN WEDNESDAY IN ANY CASE. SPECULATION THAT ARMY HAS BEEN PUT ON ALERT IS WITHOUT FOUNDATION BUT SUCH RUMORS REFLECT RECOGNITION OF AMOUNT OF SOCIAL DISRUPTION LSSP MIGHT GENERATE IF SO INCLINED. PARTY'S HEAVY CONCENTRATION OF SUPPORT IN COLOMBO AND

PARTICULARLY WITHIN THE LABOR MOVEMENT MAKE IT
POTENTIALLY VERY TROUBLESOME FORCE IN OPPOSITION.
VAN HOLLEN

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